

Business News

RFMD begins wafer fab construction

RF Micro Devices Inc (RFMD) has begun construction of a 11 900 m² wafer fab to produce HBTs. Located on a 56 650 m² site near the company's existing GaAs HBT wafer fab in Greensboro, NC, USA, the new facility is expected to begin commercial production by December 2000.

The new GaAs HBT facility will be built in two phases, with phase I expected to be capable of producing approximately 50 000 4" wafers per year. Phase II is currently scheduled for completion in late 2001 and has been designed to bring the production capacity to 210 000 4" equivalent wafers per year - approxi-

mately four times the company's current capacity.

RFMD currently employs approximately 600 people at Greensboro, and at its engineering design centres in California and Iowa. The company expects to hire an additional 800 employees over the next three years, with a large percentage of them assigned to the new wafer fab facility. It says access to a skilled labour force and state and local workforce training programs were factors supporting the decision to locate the facility in Greensboro.

Increasing demand for the company's RFICs has been fuelled by multiple factors within the wireless

communications market, including the shift toward dual-band handsets. The company has recently won contracts to supply handsets to Germany's Bosch Telecom and for the new CDMA phones being manufactured for the North American market by NEC. RFMD also reports strong sales growth in South Korea, where its customers include LGIC, Hyundai and Samsung, as well as its first major order from China. Xiamen Overseas Chinese Electronic Co will be using RFMD power amplifiers in its new dual band GSM cellular handsets designed for a rapidly growing domestic market. Xiamen entered the cellular handset

market in 1998 and expects to produce one million handsets in 2000. The deal follows a trend of accelerating telecom usage across China, climbing from just 0.38% in 1978 to 8.11% in 1997. With approximately 23 million cellular subscribers currently in China, the country anticipates growth of 10 million users per year.

RFMD posted first quarter fiscal 2000 earnings of US\$62.0 million, a 165% increase over a year earlier. Gross profit for the quarter rose to \$26.4 million, compared with the \$7.8 million posted for the period in 1998.

RFMD; tel: +1-336-664-1233; fax: +1-336-664-0454.

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Freiberger plans US\$50 million fab investment

FREIBERGER Compound Materials GmbH (FCM) is planning to invest US\$50 million in a new fab to expand production capacity for its range of GaAs wafers.

'Fab 2' will be connected to FCM's existing facility in Freiberg, Germany, boosting its ability to produce large

volume production of 6" wafers.

Fab 2 is the first stage in a bigger investment project that may reach \$150 million. "This will, however, depend on the growth rate in the wireless communications markets", says Michael Federmann, president of the Israeli Federmann

Group, which with Infineon Technologies, is the major shareholder of FCM. "For a medium-sized company like FCM, this envisaged doubling of capacity needs to be carefully planned."

FCM has enjoyed an average annual revenue growth of 40% in the past few years, with 1999 sales

expected to reach \$30 million. Since its privatization in 1995 when FCM was taken over by the Federmann Group, approximately \$50 million has been invested and an extra 100 staff hired.

Freiberger Compound Materials; tel: +49-3731-2800; fax: +49-3731-280106.

Briefs...Briefs...

APA Optics Inc (Blaine, MN, USA) has introduced a wristwatch featuring a GaN-based UV light detector. The 'SunSense Watch™' is aimed at people concerned about overexpo-

sure to radiation from the sun.

Agilent Technologies Inc is the name chosen for the **Hewlett-Packard** spinoff that will encapsulate HP's test and measurement product lines, medical products and semiconductors.

Agilent will officially commence operations on November 1, and the break-up will be completed in 2000, including an IPO that will see about 15% of Agilent's equity sold on the open market.

Atomergic Chemetals Corp (Farmingdale, NY,

USA) in cooperation with a major Israeli manufacturer, has expanded its capabilities in the growth and fabrication of sapphire crystal. These include 'carrier wafers' for GaN substrate growth of up to 4" in diameter.